

All These Flickering Lights by jelltells

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Summary:

It's October 29th, 1984 when they find her body. It's October 29th, 1984 when the boys find out that Will has been disappearing into the Upside Down. It's October 29th, 1984 when Nancy suspects that those exploding street lights may be more than they appear. It's October 29th, 1984 when everything begins again.

All These Flickering Lights

‘Breathe out, in. Breathe out, in.’ She reminded herself, “In, out, in, out.”

She heard it downstairs. The pounding of feet. The breathing. The growling. She couldn’t fight it though. Not now. She was too tired, too weak.

It should know to stay away from her. After what she had done to the other one. It should know to stay away.

She ate an Eggo slowly. She didn’t want to waste it. She didn’t know when that box would be refilled again.

Where did the monsters come from? There weren’t any when she had pulled herself back here.

She heard it scraping on the walls. Good thing this attic was difficult to get to. It wouldn’t be able to pull down the ladder.

She thinks maybe the monsters are being reproduced somewhere. She hears them in the streets. But they always sound like they’re coming from underground. They don’t bother her. They know her. But this one...

It’s in the room below her. She’ll need to kill it if it comes closer.

Perhaps it’s Will. That would make sense. No one else made it out alive.

She needed to go back, and soon. She had only woken up a few days before. After her fight with the Demagorgon, she was nothing for a long time. And she needed to go back. But her presence in Hawkins might bring more danger, and she wasn’t willing to put her friends in danger anymore. She wasn’t willing to put Mike in danger anymore. She had thought she would die when she ripped the Demagorgon apart. She didn’t sacrifice herself so that she could go back and cause more mayhem.

The monster is right below her now. It's sniffing. She could try pulling herself into the other dimension, but that would take up so much energy. Plus, she needed to eat the food here. It was too difficult pulling external objects into other places.

Still, she knew what she felt in the times when she dreamed and her mind reached out to her friends in Hawkins. She didn't know why no one else felt it. The feeling reminded her of her time in the lab, when she was anxious and scared and so, so alone: the feeling of oncoming danger.

The monster pulls down on the door. Eleven knows what she must do. She puts down her Eggo and waits. It's not the first time she's killed before. But she grits her teeth and thinks of her friends as the monster makes it's way up the stairs. She thinks of Hawkins, and the dreams she briefly got to have, and Dustin and Lucas and Mike and Will. She stands up and looks towards the entry. And all of a sudden, the monster's there. There's blood running down her lip and the lights begin flashing.

Chapter 1: The Lights in the Attic

Tuesday, October 29th, 1984 - Hawkins, Indiana

Will woke up at 5 o'clock in the morning. Like he had been doing for the past 10 months.

He rolled over and did his daily routine of trying to get back to sleep. First he counted down from 100, and when this didn't work, and it never did, he rolled to his other side and tried the same thing. Then he did some sit ups to tire him out. Three minutes. Then he tried lying completely still for five minutes. Then he practiced taking deep breaths and relaxing his body entirely. When none of this worked, and it hadn't for the past few months, Will got out of his bed and went to his desk. He made sure to walk as far away from his

window as possible and not look at it. He no longer liked being able to see outside.

At his desk he would read his comics or idly go through some school textbooks or draw. But he always made sure he was quiet and didn't leave his room until 6:45. His mother would know something was wrong if she found out he had been only sleeping for about 4 hours a night (because in addition to waking up early, he wasn't going to sleep until hours past his bedtime).

He chose not to think about his insomnia or the reasons behind it. He knew he had been having strange dreams ever since he returned from the Upside Down, but he could never remember what the dreams were about when he woke up. All he knew was that he woke up with a feeling of coldness. Almost like the type of cold in the Upside Down.

He spent his morning drawing. He drew a picture of a cabin. It was dark, but he could tell there was something-someone in the window. All the trees were hung with moss and some slimy stuff. He got a chill as he realized he was drawing the Upside Down. Will never knew why he drew these pictures. He didn't really like looking at them. They were almost too...realistic. Like he'd seen these places before and had a bad feeling about them. He put down his crayons when he realized how creepy the picture was. He picked up an X-Men comic instead and flipped through it.

He got up only when he heard his mother making coffee.

"Sleep well?" Joyce asked Will as he came into the kitchen.

Will nodded and sat down at the table.

"I made your favorite, eggs, bacon and toast!" Joyce said, "Although the toast got a little burnt and the eggs aren't really fully cooked..."

"Mom, it's fine." Will said laughing.

Joyce doled out Will's breakfast and greeted Jonathan as he

walked into the kitchen.

“Are you busy tonight? I was thinking about making a pot roast. Bob’s going to come over.” Joyce said to Jonathan.

“Actually, I’m working a double shift tonight. Gabe asked me to.” Jonathan said.

“Oh darn. What about tomorrow?” Joyce asked.

“I think so. I’ll check the schedule again.” Jonathan said sitting down with his own plate of eggs, bacon, and toast.

Joyce smiled. Will had noticed that his mother had been trying to get the family together for sit down meals more and more lately. Especially since she’d been dating Bob. Before the Upside Down, the Byers usually only had family dinners on holidays or the occasional Sunday. Now Joyce tried to have a big dinner every week. Will liked this, but it was another thing that reminded him of his time *there*, and how being there made him different.

Will finished up his breakfast and grabbed his backpack. He waved goodbye to his mother and Jonathan, both who grabbed him to give him a hug, and set off out his front door.

It was a day like any other day Will had ever had. Well, it was like days he had now, in the aftermath of that one week Hawkins went Upside Down. And these days Will often felt like he was walking in a haze. It hadn’t felt like that when he had first come back. No, when he had first come back he had felt victorious, happy. He felt like he had survived a real life monster attack (which he literally had), and his friends gathered around him swapping tales of his time in the Upside Down and their time with Eleven.

Eleven. Will sighed, pushing his bike down Mirkwood.

Eleven was a girl he had never even met. Well, he had kind of met her once, when he was half dead in the Castle Byers, and then the monster-

Will stopped himself. No. It wouldn’t do to think of those things. No. Will the Wise is smart enough to stop himself from going

there. But Eleven-

Eleven was just another reminder of that week, and how that week never really left any of the people who were there for it. Who lived through it. Will often thought about Eleven and prayed for her. She was an emblem of what it had cost to bring him back. He often felt guilty about it.

Will continued pushing his bike down Mirkwood. He no longer rode his bike on this street. It was a bit of paranoia, but Will felt if he rode his bike down Mirkwood he would constantly be looking for a monster at the other end.

Mirkwood didn't scare him like he thought it would when he first came back. It just looked like any other street now. But even still, Will waited until he got to the end of the street to get on his bike. He pushed off and began biking his way to school, with no idea of the mysterious events that would unfold that day.

"Are the eggs okay?" Karen Wheeler asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Hm?" Nancy said looking up, "Oh. Oh yeah-I'm just not that hungry right now." She finished lamely.

Karen looked at her eldest daughter for a moment more before going back to feeding Holly her eggs.

Nancy looked back down at her plate as she continued pushing around her food. Her head was swimming. Not that it wasn't always these days. Last night had been...interesting to say the least.

Steve had called her the night before.

"How's the prettiest girl in Hawkins doing?" Steve said. Nancy could actually hear his smirk.

"Prettiest in Hawkins? So I'm not the prettiest girl in the

world?” She asked.

“Excuses m’lady. Prettiest in the galaxy?”

Nancy smiled. This was typical Steve banter. It made her heart beat a little bit faster every time. It was like their own secret game.

“I’m doing fine. Studying.”

“Of course.”

“Why are you calling?”

“What? Can’t I call my girlfriend?”

Nancy laughed, but she didn’t really feel like it, “You can, but I know you want something.”

“You underestimate me.”

“Oh really?” Nancy said.

“Yes. I just called you to talk to you.”

“Mhmmmm...”

“...and to ask if you wanted to come over.”

Nancy laughed, “Sure. I’ll be over in 30?”

“Sounds good babe.”

And then it had all gone to shit.

Nancy looked over at her brother. Mike’s hair was in his eyes as he ate his syrupy eggs. Nancy thought back to a year ago, when Mike was much younger (not only in his age but in his innocence and naiveté). He’d grown up quite a bit since then. He was taller and he

was losing his baby face. He was starting to look like an actual teenager and not just some scrawny kid. But Nancy could see how much he had aged mentally in the past year. He rarely smiled like he used to. He never seemed as genuinely happy anymore. He did things slower, like he had no interest in actually living his life. He'd also been quieter and sometimes Nancy watched as he stared into space for minutes at a time. Before, he was all energy and excitement with only the thought of adventure in his mind. Now he was reserved and introspective with thoughts that Nancy couldn't even fathom. She sighed looking at him and turned back to her own breakfast.

Will met up with Dustin, and they rode out to meet up with Lucas and Mike.

"Got that new X-men comic?" Dustin asked, biking while trying to simultaneously eat string cheese. It wasn't working and he kept swerving and nearly running into Will.

"Yeah. You wanna borrow it?" Will asked.

"Yeah, thanks man. You want to head over to the comic store after school? I heard there's a new Spiderman out too."

"Sure!" Will answered. At that moment they pulled to the end of Maple Street and stopped in front of Lucas' and Mike's houses.

Mike walked out with his bike. Dustin and Will greeted him and Mike nodded his head.

"Where's Lucas?" Dustin asked.

Mike shrugged.

"Well, he did go home last night didn't he?" Dustin said.

"Sure...I mean...yeah he did..." Mike said. He was distracted, and not just because he was usually distracted these days. Something had happened that morning that made Mike's mind seem foggy and slow.

“‘Sure’? Seriously Mike?”

“What?” Mike looked up at Dustin as if he was just now noticing he was there.

“Hello? Where’s Lucas? Do you not even know if he went home last night?” Dustin said.

“Dustin-“ Will started but Mike interrupted with, “Sure he went home! You saw him leave the basement didn’t you?”

“Yes, but where is he now?” Dustin said.

“I don’t know!” Mike said.

“Do you even care?” Dustin said quietly. Mike was about to fire back at this, but at that moment, Lucas came running outside.

“Guys! Guys!” He said running up and stopping right in front of his friends, “You guys have to see this.” Lucas said. The boys had been friends for so long that they didn’t even ask Lucas what he needed them to see. Whenever his voice got quiet and serious, the other boys knew to follow him wherever he said to go.

Dustin, Mike, and Will left their bikes in the middle of the street and followed Lucas into his house. Lucas’ parents had both already left for work so there was no one home (“which is good” Lucas said as he marched them up to his room, “because they would have flipped”).

Lucas’ bedroom was right below the attic, and his room had an old fashioned pull down stair that provided access to it. The minute the boys entered his room they realized why he had called them up.

“What...what is that?” Dustin asked.

There was loud music coming from the attic, or at least, it sounded like it was supposed to be music. But it sounded mostly like static and white noise.

“That’s not all of it.” Lucas said, making to pull down the

stairs.

“What are you doing?!” Dustin asked.

“Um, I’m showing you what else is up there.” Lucas said in his “duh” voice.

“Are you crazy?! It could be ghosts.”

“I think it’s worse than ghosts.” Will said quietly. The boys turned to look at him but he was wearing his (now) signature far-off stare. He always looked haunted when his eyes got glassy like that. ‘Maybe he is’ Mike said to himself, turning back to look at Lucas, “Open it.” Mike said.

Lucas jumped up and pulled down the handle. Instantly, the music got 10x louder and the boys saw, once again, what Lucas was talking about.

Even from down below they could all see the lights flickering crazily up above.

“What’s happening?” Dustin asked.

“I don’t know. I woke up last night when I heard the noise, and I saw the lights between the cracks in the door. I thought my parents would wake up, but they never did. It’s been doing this for hours.” Lucas said.

“Me too.” Mike said.

“Huh?” Lucas asked.

“Me too. I woke up last night and my Super Com was full of static. I turned it off, but it just turned on again. Then my lamp started flickering.”

The boys stood there taking in all this information. Will was the only one who looked like he wasn’t thinking deeply about it, and asked after a minute, “Are we going up there?”

“Where? The attic? Why?” Lucas said.

“Don’t you want to see what’s happening up there?” Will asked. The other boys turned to look at him. He didn’t sound like himself.

“Um...not really? I mean, it’s creepy.” Lucas said.

“Hey guys, didn’t Nancy say the flickering lights is what happened when the Demogorgon was near?”

Will nodded.

“Well...does that mean-“

“No.” Lucas said, “I mean, if the Demogorgon were here, it would have already got me, right?”

“We should go up there.” Will said, already starting to climb up.

“What-Will?” Lucas said, making to pull him down, but Mike followed behind Will.

“Mike? What are you doing?” Dustin asked.

“Going up.” Mike said, as if it should be obvious.

“You could get killed!” Dustin said.

“Stop being a baby and come on up.” Mike said.

The four boys entered the attic. It was cluttered with drawers, lights, pointless antiques, chairs, moth-eaten quilts, and, for some reason, a stuffed ostrich. But the most important items were the lamps flickering on and off, and a record player in the corner that was playing with no record but was making noise all the same.

“Weird.” Mike said, shuffling his shoes and pretending he wasn’t terrified. This reminded him forcibly of *that* week. He simultaneously loved and hated to think back to that week. And now, it seemed like that week was catching up to them. It made sense though. The effects of that week persisted everyday, and Mike only understood a little of how much his life had changed in those five

days of knowing- well, of knowing about monsters and other dimensions and such. And of course, her.

Unknown to Mike, Dustin and Lucas were both having vivid flashbacks of that week as well. Both began to feel cold for no apparent reason. And, although he would never admit it to anyone, Lucas could feel tears welling up in his eyes as he thought about what they had all lost. Specifically, *who* they had lost.

“What does this mean?” Dustin asked quietly.

Mike looked at Dustin, and then his eyes shifted over a little and he noticed something out of the ordinary, “Hey, where’s Will?”

Lucas and Dustin looked around but Will wasn’t there in the attic.

“What? Where did he go?” Lucas asked.

“He-he came up first. Where would he have gone? Will!” Dustin said.

Mike and Lucas began calling his name too. But he wasn’t there. He wasn’t anywhere.

As the boys began panicking and looking behind the furniture, Will appeared suddenly in the middle of the room. One minute he wasn’t there, and then the next he was.

“Wha-“ Mike began and then realized he had no words to say.

Will looked at all of them in turn. His scared eyes darted around and his mouth opened and closed with all the words he wanted to say to them, but nothing came out.

“What-what was that?! You were here, and then you weren’t!” Lucas said.

Dustin’s jaw was on the ground. Mike looked uneasy and took a step back from Will. Will just looked, well, resigned.

He sighed, “C’mon. I’ll tell you guys on the way to school.”

The boys were late to class. But school, teachers, annoying classmates, and crappy school lunches didn't matter at all anymore. The minute Will finished his story, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin began coming up with ideas of how they would stop Will from shadow walking. Will didn't have the heart to tell them about the...slugs...or whatever they were. Not yet. Or the...voice...

But the way his friends reacted when he told them about the shadow-walking (i.e., not scared or worried or angry at him), Will knew he could tell them just about anything and they wouldn't see him as a freak.

Not for the first time, Will felt extremely lucky to have such good best friends.

Nancy pulled on her backpack as she heard Steve outside honking.

"Hey, your brother and his friends left their bikes in the street." Steve said as Nancy got in the car.

Nancy looked back and, indeed, they had abandoned their bikes in the street.

"It's probably nothing. I'm sure Lucas got like, a new videogame or something and wanted to show the boys." Nancy said, even though everything out of the ordinary made her paranoid these days.

"Yeah." Steve said. He put his hand on the back of her head and leaned in and kissed her forehead.

Nancy smiled at him and looked out the window. She glanced back to where the bikes lay in the middle of the street.

"Hey...I'm sorry about last night." Steve said.

"It's fine." Nancy said.

“No...no it isn’t. I was a total asshole, Nancy. I’m sorry.” Steve said.

Nancy looked at him. Over the last year Steve had gotten a lot better at being sincere. Even though his part in that week of the Upside Down was minimal, he was still there, and he still volunteered to fight alongside Nancy. He too had grown from the experience, and Nancy was happy for him.

“Steve, really, it’s fine.” Nancy said. And she meant it.

Steve smiled and grabbed her hand. As Steve started the car, with one hand still firmly holding hers, Nancy looked out the window and thought about what was really bothering her.

Last night had seemed like a dream to Nancy. She had vivid images stuck in her brain: of parking in front of Steve’s house, of looking out at his pool (and thinking of Barb), then of Steve trying to take things too far, touching her in places she didn’t want to be touched, his face as she slapped him, and then-

Then she had driven home. She was so angry with Steve. It’s not like she didn’t want to be intimate with him (again), but she had tied sex with Steve inexplicably with the death of Barb. They had happened at the same time hadn’t they? And if Nancy just hadn’t gone and slept with him, wasted time with him, hadn’t listened to Barb, Nancy would still have her best friend.

Nancy knew it was foolish to think of intimacy with Steve as being the same as killing her best friend, and perhaps there was another reason for her wanting to stay away from sex with Steve, but she couldn’t help herself.

Steve had been kind and thoughtful for the past 11 months. He hadn’t rushed anything. He understood what they had all gone through, and what her little brother had gone through, what her best friend had gone through, that made her hesitant to think about romance. But she could tell he was getting impatient with her. Hell, she was getting impatient with herself. What was she waiting for

anyways? Would she never have sex with Steve again? Is that what she wanted?

All of these things she thought of as she drove home. But all of a sudden, as she was driving on Link street, one of the streetlights had gone out. Nancy unconsciously slowed down to look up as she passed under it. Not only had it gone out, but it seemed to have exploded. The glass was missing from it and it was smoking lightly. Nancy tried not to think of what she tended to think of whenever a light bulb burned out, or she heard a noise outside her window, or anything startled her in the least. She tried to keep her head. But then the next streetlight had exploded.

Nancy had driven fast off of Link street, but without exception, every streetlight she passed underneath exploded and rained down glass on her car.

It had stopped once she reached Redwood Road. When Nancy got home, she ran inside and locked her bedroom door. She sat on her bed for hours shaking.

And now here she was. Sitting in Steve's car. With knowledge about something that could get everyone killed. Nancy wasn't stupid (far from it). She knew what this meant. But whom could she talk to?

She turned to look at Steve, who was now tapping on his steering wheel and bobbing his head to a song on the radio. Could she tell him? Nancy wondered.

At this time, there was really only one person Nancy wanted to talk to, but that person wasn't someone she could really say was a friend. And it was someone she hadn't really talked to in months. But, if not him, who else?

As the boys and Nancy arrived at their respective schools, Jim Hopper was getting out of bed.

He woke up slowly. Waking up was the best part of Jim Hopper's day, because when he was in that hangover state and his

mind was clouded and foggy, it took him awhile to remember who he was and what his life had become. That's why waking up always took twenty minutes for him.

He looked over at the clock. 8:32. He would be late if he didn't get going soon.

It's not like anyone ever held him responsible for being late, considering he was the Chief of Police and all, but still, he tried to be on time. 'There was nothing to do in this damned trailer anyway' he thought.

He climbed off the couch and instantly grabbed the beer that was sitting on the coffee table (that he didn't finish before he nodded off to sleep) and took a swig. He grabbed some anti-anxiety pills off the table and swigged those down with beer. He supposed you weren't supposed to mix pills and alcohol, but anything to get him through the day.

He put on his uniform and headed out, making sure to look at one of Sarah's drawings hanging on the mantelpiece before leaving.

Work had settled down significantly since that last awful November week. The most serious crime he had seen in the time since was when that asshole teenager Tommy stole money from Dan's Gas Station. Besides that, there weren't any other serious crimes (and Hopper didn't think stealing \$30 from a gas station was really that serious of a crime either). But Hopper was one to always be on the lookout. It wasn't like him to let his guard down. And after what had happened with Will, and Hawkins Lab, and that other dimension, and the girl, Hopper wasn't going to ever think for a moment that things would go back to normal.

He arrived at just a little past 9 at the police station. He went to his desk, slapping some of the deputies on the head as he made his way along, and sat down. He looked over some files of little to no significance. Then he got up and got coffee. Then he sat back down. Forty minutes later he got up again and got coffee. Then he sat down. It was like any other day.

Except at 11:07, when Joyce entered the police station.

“Hopper!” She called over the receptionist’s desk, much to the annoyance of Flo who was trying to get her to sign in.

Hopper’s heart jumped a little when he saw her, but that turned to an unhappy feeling when she realized who she was with: Bob Newby. Rumor was that Bob and Joyce were now a couple. Hopper did not like this, but if anyone asked, he couldn’t tell them why.

“Joyce.” He said, walking out of his office.

“Hopper. Uh...you know Bob.” Joyce gestured vaguely in Bob’s direction.

“Of course. How are ya, Bob?” Hopper asked, extending his hand for Bob to shake.

Bob shook his hand with much more enthusiasm than Hopper deserved and said, “Been ages, Hop. I can’t believe I’ve barely seen you since high school.”

“Yeah, well.” Hopper said awkwardly.

Joyce stood there for a moment more and then said, “Bob saw something suspicious last night, Hopper. Something...um...well, why don’t you tell him Bob.”

Bob nodded. He had a round face and big, trusting eyes. He was short and stocky. Hopper didn’t like the look of him, even if he had known him for about twenty years and had never had a problem with him before.

“Suspicious?” Hopper said.

“Yes. Ummm....can I close the door?” Bob pointed back towards Hopper’s office door.

Hopper sighed quietly enough that Bob didn’t hear him but Joyce did. She scowled at him. Hopper waved for Bob to close it.

“So...it was when I was coming back from Radio Shack last night.”

“Mm.”

“And there were these men outside of my store.”

“Your store on Link street?” Hopper asked.

“Uh...yeah.”

“There was a power outage last night. Seems like there was a surge or something and the streetlamps all went out-“ Hopper said.

“But that’s not it!” Bob interrupted, “It wasn’t the Power guys! Well...I mean...it was them. But it wasn’t just the power guys! There were all sorts of other people there. People in suits.”

Hopper fiddled with the cuff of his shirt, “Hawkins Power and Energy?”

“Yeah they were there, but there were like, twenty guys there-“

“Is this what you came in to tell me about?” Hopper asked.

“Hop.” Joyce said, shooting him a look that said, ‘Shut up’. It weirdly kind of turned Hopper on.

“That’s not all!” Bob said, and Hopper forced himself to turn back to the annoying guy across from him, “They-they asked me if I’d seen a little girl.”

“A little girl?” Hopper said, his voice suddenly serious.

“Yeah. They asked if I’d seen a little girl. A runaway, or something. And then, they searched my store. Are they allowed to do that?”

“Is this why you came in? To ask if they were allowed to search your store?” Hopper asked in disbelief.

Bob nodded.

Hopper shook his head and reminded himself to be civil, “Did

you give them permission?”

“Well...yeah...they were kind of...intimidating.”

Hopper thought a bunny would probably make Bob feel intimidated. But he didn't say this because Joyce was now looking at him and he felt himself wanting to behave for her at least, “If you gave them permission then yes, they're allowed to go into your store. Next time tell them to get a permit before coming in.”

Bob took this all in and nodded slowly, “Thanks Hop. Strange business otherwise isn't it? What's up with all those men coming to look at a power outage?”

“Yes. It is odd.” Joyce said with a pointed look at Hopper, “Hey Bob, why don't you wait out in the car? I need to talk to Hopper about something really quick.”

“Sure thing, sweetie.” Bob said, stepping over to her and kissing her on the mouth really quick, which evidently embarrassed Joyce. She did her best to smile at him, but fidgeted the whole time until he had left the office.

“I like your boyfriend.” Hopper said.

Joyce scoffed, “Of course you do.”

“No really. He seems...innocent.” Hopper said.

Joyce looked at him for a second and then decided to just drop it, “You heard what he said right. They asked him about a *little girl*? *The* little girl?”

“Could be.” Hopper said.

“‘Could be’? Why would those Hawkins Energy people be looking for a little girl if it isn't that one?”

“Maybe there's another telekinetic little girl?” Hopper said.

Joyce studied his face, “You know something.”

Hopper gave a dry laugh, "Of course I don't. Why would I??"

"Oh my God, you do know something." Joyce said.

"No." Hopper said.

"Yes."

"No."

"Yes."

"No! Okay Joyce? No! And even if I did, which I'm not saying I do, you don't need to get caught up in this again. It's too dangerous."

"But if it's that girl, and I'm sure it is, and she's out there, we need to protect her!" Joyce said.

Hopper grabbed Joyce's shoulders, "Joyce, you have two boys who need you. You can't get caught up in this."

"But that little girl-"

"She'll be fine. She's strong, stronger than anyone I've ever met-"

"But she's still a little girl." Joyce said, "It doesn't matter how well she can take care of herself. I looked in her eyes, Hop, at the school, and I saw the same expression I've seen on Will or Jonathan's faces whenever they're scared. She's just a little girl. She may be able to do extraordinary things, but at the end of the day she is still a child."

Hopper's jaw set. All he had done was beginning to wash over him, yet again. He had sold out a little girl because he wasn't clever enough to find a way to get both Will and Eleven back. He had thrown a little girl, who had never had a chance in life, back into the very arms of the people who had abused her. He had destroyed a little girl, and he wonders now if he has any right to still feel sorry for losing his own little girl.

“Joyce, whatever is happening here, if it’s anything at all, let me handle it. No one is relying on me.” He took his hands off her shoulders and turned around to look out the window.

“Hop, you know there are people who love you, don’t you?” Joyce said.

That made Hopper laugh, “Like who?”

Joyce wanted to say “me”, but she wasn’t sure how Hopper would take that, or what she would mean by that, so instead she said, “The whole town. Everyone likes you, Hop. You’re not disposable like you think you are.”

Hopper’s back stiffened but he kept staring out the window. Joyce sighed, “Just-just call me if you need me Hop. For any reason.” She then left the room. Hopper wished he hadn’t given up smoking.

Mr. Clarke began packing up his stuff from the table for lunchtime. As he was putting away his 8th grade science textbook, he heard a very loud cough. Looking up, he saw Dustin, and the rest of the boys, standing in front of his desk.

“Yes?” He said amusedly.

“We have a question Mr. Clarke.” Dustin said. Mr. Clarke had noticed how Dustin was always the talker in the group.

“And what is that boys?” He said. Lunch was starting soon, but he was willing to spend his entire lunch period talking with these four boys if they wanted to. They were all incredibly smart, and amazing friends to one another. And of course, Mr. Clarke admired them greatly after what had happened last year.

“Is it possible for power to surge in a singular place?” Dustin asked.

“What do you mean?” Mr. Clarke said.

“Like, for example, is it possible for lights to flicker in only one room of a house?”

“Well, is the bulb broken in the light?”

“No.”

“Then it would depend on the individual circuits. You’re only getting electricity from one source: a power company. But each room probably has it’s own individual circuit, which means that perhaps the circuit is broken or disrupted for whatever room you’re referring to. You could always try turning off the breaker panel for that room and getting someone to come and fix it, if you’re worried about your own-“

“No, no, no. This is all hypothetical.” Dustin said.

“Oh.” Mr. Clarke thought this a very weird hypothetical situation that four 13-year old boys would want to discuss. But who was he to be surprised? These are the same kids who called him up last year at 10 o’clock at night to ask how to “hypothetically” make a sensory deprivation tank.

“Well if that’s it boys-“ Mr. Clarke began but Mike interrupted with, “No! We have another question!”

Will suddenly walked out of the room with a “I’ll be back in a moment.”

“What is it?” Mr. Clarke asked Mike.

“Remember when we asked you about the multiple universes? At Will’s funeral?”

Mr. Clarke internally flinched at the reminder of that time but nodded.

“Well, we were wondering if, hypothetically, universes can be...um...connected. Like, can universes exist close together and interact with one another?”

“That’s an interesting question. Where are you boys coming up with this?” Mr. Clarke said.

The boys looked at each other and shrugged.

“Well, I guess it would depend on energy. Remember how I told you guys about a gate to another universe would require an insane amount of energy? I think it would also require energy to interact with another universe while remaining inside your own. Or, if the other universe had some sort of way of easily communicating with another, like some sort of item that could be easily manipulated in a parallel universe-“

“Lights” Mike muttered.

“Sure, lights. Then you could, hypothetically communicate with another universe. But this is all highly hypothetical. Nothing like this has ever been even close to proven. The multiple universe theory is just a theory after all.” Mr. Clarke said smiling at the boys. But to his surprise, the boys all looked gravely serious.

“Thanks, Mr. Clarke.” Lucas said, nodding and walking out of the classroom. The other boys followed him. Mr. Clarke wasn’t sure what he had said to make them so serious.

“So it’s possible.” Lucas said when they were out of the classroom.

“Yeah, but we knew it was possible. Why even ask Mr. Clarke?” Mike said.

“Because we need all the facts straight! If Lucas’ attic is going crazy, and your SuperCom is turning on, then we need to know that it’s scientifically possible that something is in a parallel universe trying to communicate.” Dustin said.

“Like in the Upside Down?” Mike asked.

“I guess.” Dustin shrugged his shoulders, but his nonchalant tone didn’t match his eyes as he looked at Mike. Whenever anything reminded Mike of the Upside Down, or monsters, or superpowers, he would always think of *her*. The way Mike’s eyes were looking at the ground confirmed to Dustin that he was thinking it was her on the other side of those lights.

They had stopped talking about her a long time ago. Basically a few weeks after it all happened. At first, Eleven was like a crazy story to them. Sure it made them sad that she had disappeared, but they thought she would return soon enough. All the boys had delayed reactions to her disappearance. Almost like they didn't want to believe it and so they didn't. For a few weeks. But Dustin and Lucas began to feel her absence like it was a physical thing, like it was always there, and they began to feel empty. Whenever they would play Dungeons and Dragons there would always come a time when Lucas would think about how it was just a game, and adventures in real life didn't always go so smoothly. They weren't triumphant. Dustin would remember how superpowers in real life just make you a target, and how sometimes they make you take the fall for people weaker than you. And even Will, who didn't really know Eleven, would think of how fighting monsters and defeating them wasn't a way to win. It was just a way to die. Dustin, Lucas, and Will would whisper these things to each other when they thought Mike couldn't hear. And if he heard, he never said so.

The rest of the boys didn't know how Mike felt, because he had never talked about Eleven past those first few weeks. It wasn't that he didn't want to, although he thought he would probably cry if he did (and he felt like he had cried enough already), but he just couldn't. There was too much to say. It would never be enough anyways. It would never be enough.

He talked to her at night, though. He talked on his SuperCom when everyone in his house was sleeping. He would go to her fort and sit there and just ramble on about his day. In his mind he was always talking to her. She was a good listener, even when she wasn't physically there.

'One day', he told himself, everyday, 'One day I'll find you.'

He thought about this now as Lucas and Dustin talked about the Upside Down and what could be messing with the lights.

"Hey, where's Will?" Mike interrupted them.

Lucas shrugged, "I guess in the bathroom. We should head over that way anyways. Lunch is gonna be over soon."

Death...death...death...kill...

What? No? I...I...don't...want-

Kill them...kill her...

Who's them? Who's her?

Friends....Kill them like they killed me...

Me...you're not me...you're not...

Kill her like she killed me

Not me...I'm not you....

Kill her...

No...What? No....

Find her...

N-

Kill her...

"No!" Will yelled at his reflection.

The Upside Down flashed and Will forced himself to calm down, to pull himself back. When he looked at his reflection again, his eyes appeared darker, his pupils bigger and the skin around his eyes darkened, and the veins in his face were popping out. He took a shallow breath and threw up one of those...slugs...

Will wiped his face and watched as the slug went down the sink. He ran the tap just to make sure it was really washed away.

"Will?" Lucas called into the bathroom.

"Yeah?" Will said, trying his best to stop his voice from shaking.

“Hey, what’s up man? We’re about to miss lunch.” Lucas said walking into the bathroom.

“Are you okay?” Dustin asked after looking at Will’s face.

“Yeah, sure. Totally fine. Why wouldn’t I be?” Will smiled.

“Yeah Dustin, what would make him upset in the bathroom?” Lucas said.

“Oh, I could think of a few things.”

Dustin, Lucas, and Will all laughed. Mike didn’t even pretend to be amused. He stood at the door to the bathroom and looked thoughtful. In another time, before Eleven had happened, the boys would have asked him what was wrong. But the three boys now knew never to comment when Mike didn’t laugh or smile.

Will finished laughing and said, “Hey, let’s go to lunch.”

“Dr. Brenner?”

“Hm?”

The short man stood in the doorway of Brenner’s office, wringing his hands, “Sir, I’ve been called down to...do clean up.”

“Clean up?” Brenner said. He sat in his chair looking out a window that looked down on the Hawkins forest. He had yet to make a move to turn around and look at his visitor.

“Yes, Sir, clean up.”

“They already did clean up. Last year.”

“Right, Sir. You are correct. But, there’s been a problem.”

Brenner said nothing to this.

“Um...you see, Sir, the tracking device came back on.”

There was a few tense seconds in which no one made a move, but then Brenner was up out of his chair and practically ran to the little man standing at the doorway, "What tracking device?" He growled.

"The..um..the one, Sir. The one that went off last year. The one for...experiment 011."

"That-that's impossible. My men went into the other dimension--"

"Yes, well, the issue is," the little man continued on hurriedly, too scared to slow down, "that the National lab has detected other dimensions. Just within the last few months. No big deal, really. Doesn't seem to be any life in there, from what our radars are able to pick up, but we think she may be in one of those dimensions--"

"Then why the hell did her tracking device go off?" Brenner said, spraying spit into the face of the little man.

The man laughed humorlessly, "We-we...um...we don't know. She could have been too far, or she might have been in the dark dimension, and it just didn't pick up. The tracking device isn't showing where she is, just that it's on again--"

"But we had men in there! Men went into the dark universe! There was no trace of her."

"But Sir, she pulled herself between our world and the dark world without a gate. Is it possible she could have pulled herself back--"

"No. She would have killed the monster by then. She wouldn't be able to pull herself through." Brenner said, more to himself than the other man.

"The monster-oh, you ascribe to Dr. Ewen's theory, then?"

"Yes. There's no way a human could universe-hop. She needed the monster to pull herself through. Specifically, she needed the monster's ability to flow between universes. It's the only

explanation. Otherwise, she would have come back by now.” Brenner walked to the other side of the room in an attempt to burn off some energy.

“...would she have, Sir?”

“What-of course she would have! Why wouldn’t she? She has friends here, she would have come back for that little boy-that Wheeler kid-“

“Unless she wanted to protect them.” The little man added.

“Protect them? Why would she care about that?” Brenner said, looking confused for the first time in years.

“Well, she died trying to save them-“

“She didn’t die. She knew she wasn’t going to die.”

“I’m not so sure about that. We think the tracker went off because she didn’t exist, at least for a little while.”

“Didn’t exist?”

“Yes. We think it was maybe possible for her to break herself apart, and then put herself back together.”

Brenner thought about this for a moment, “That would defy physics. Hell, that would defy basic biology.”

“It would defy logic, Sir.”

“And, if that is true, why is the tracker back on now? She put herself back together?”

“That is what we think, yes Sir.”

The little man was sweating by this point, but he could tell the conversation was coming to an end.

“What do we do now?” Brenner asked quietly.

“HQ wants us to send her back.”

“...send her back? We can’t even find her-“

“No, not actually her. She’ll come back soon enough, but not right away. She’s smarter than that. But when she does come back, there’ll be a lot of people that will help her. Some of your own men have been asking about a little girl.”

“Yes. Those idiots asked one of the civilians about it last night. Stupid, really. They need to be more covert.” He mumbled.

“I agree. But anyways, they won’t help her if they believe she’s already back.”

“But, they’ll know if she turns up-“

“Which she won’t.” the little man was wearing a grin now, “Not if we can stop her first. But if she’s “already” back, no one will go looking for her. It will give us time. We can fly under the radar. Especially now with the power outages. Those people from last year are beginning to notice something is happening. They might look for her. But they won’t if she’s already here.”

Brenner thought he saw where the little man was going with his point, they had done it before after all, but he wanted it clarified, “You mean-“

“I mean we send in a decoy.”

“...nine?”

“Yes Sir, nine.”

Nancy spent lunchtime thinking over what to do about Steve. Should she tell him about the lights? She knew he was there last year, and he would understand what those exploding lights meant, but something was holding Nancy back.

Her and Steve ate with a couple other people they had met in the last year. Tommy and Carol were long gone. In fact, Tommy had dropped out to support Carol, who was now pregnant. So, Nancy

thought, her and Steve had definitely improved their acquaintances.

Julie was a girl Nancy had met at her Biology study group (since studying with Steve wasn't really that productive at all) and Sandy was a new girl who Nancy had just happened to sit next to in her Calculus class. Even though it was nice sitting with these girls and Steve, Nancy didn't really know Julie or Sandy, and it always felt like there was something missing whenever they tried to talk together. After Nancy had seen the possibilities of the universe, with different dimensions, telekinetic girls, monsters, and government cover-ups, it was more difficult for her to try to blend in as a normal teenage girl. She just wasn't that naïve 16 year-old anymore.

"You guys heard about the power outage last night?" Julie asked the table.

Nancy's grip tightened on her bottle and Steve said, "Nah. Where was it?"

"Link street." Sandy said, "Apparently there was surge and the lamps exploded."

Nancy looked at Sandy, but she didn't seem to be suspecting her. Why would she? Perhaps Nancy was being paranoid. Power surges did happen. Yet still...the lights exploded right as she drove under them...

"It's strange. I've never known street lamps to explode before just because of a power surge." Sandy said. Sandy had darker skin, dark hair, and dark eyes that made her have a far-off look. She would occasionally say things like this, things that Nancy thought hit really close to the truth, and she would have this look on her face that Nancy couldn't decipher. She almost looked sad when she said this. But then her eyes were on Nancy and Nancy looked away to escape her eyesight.

That's when she saw him across the room. The same mussed up hair, the same band t-shirts and baggy jeans, but somehow he was different every time she saw him.

Jonathan was sitting by himself. He was eating a packed

lunch and looking at a film strip. Nancy made a split-second decision and said to Steve, "I'm going to go talk to Jonathan. I'll be back in a moment." If Steve thought this odd he didn't show it.

"Hey...Jonathan." Nancy said as she got to his table.

"Oh...hey Nancy." Jonathan said, giving her a smile.

"Mind if I sit?"

Jonathan waved his hand and Nancy sat down across from him.

"Um...how's-how's your day going?" Nancy said, cringing at how awkward she was.

Jonathan laughed, "Good. And yours?"

"Good." Nancy said.

They stared at each other without realizing it. They only broke eye contact when Jonathan looked over Nancy's shoulder and noticed Steve watching them.

"Um...so how's Mike?" Jonathan asked. He rubbed his hands, which had suddenly become sweaty, on his knees and tried not to look back at Steve.

Nancy looked down, "He's the usual. Not happy. He doesn't seem too bad lately, though."

Jonathan nodded.

"How's Will?" Nancy asked.

"Fine. I mean, I don't think he's sleeping. But he's not coming to Mom or I about it, so..."

A silence fell once again. Nancy wished she were better at talking to Jonathan. They were great friends during that awful week, but the intimacy that had formed between them had stagnated during peaceful times. They hadn't consciously avoided each other, but what

did they say to each other now that they had nothing left in common? Talk about their depressed little brothers?

“So...I had something I wanted to talk to you about.” Nancy said.

Jonathan’s expression became serious, “What is it?”

“It’s not-“ Nancy wanted to say “a big deal”, but that would completely defeat the purpose of why she was talking to him, “Something happened...last night.”

In a few words Nancy told Jonathan about the lights. He didn’t say anything at first. This reminded Nancy of why she had found Jonathan so intriguing a year ago: he was different than Steve and the other boys she knew. He was introspective and didn’t dismiss others. He found meaning in everything, and right now that was coming in handy.

“You think it’s from the other side?” Jonathan said.

“I don’t know. I feel like that would be jumping to conclusions...”

“But...” Jonathan teased her.

Nancy smiled for a moment, “But...yes. I think it’s probably from...the other side.”

Jonathan nodded and looked up at Nancy intensely, “Why are you talking to me about this?”

His tone wasn’t mean, but Nancy still felt slightly defensive, “Well you were there last year. You know about it more than-more than others.”

“Steve?” Jonathan asked.

“Wha-no. No. It’s just-you understand this. You went through it.”

Jonathan looked down and toyed with the film he was

looking at before. Nancy noticed it and looked down at it, but Jonathan pulled it away before she could see what was on it.

Jonathan looked up at Nancy to gauge her reaction, but it was obvious she hadn't seen the pictures. That was good.

"What are you going to do?" He asked.

"I don't know. What can we do? Wait around for another monster to show up?"

"We won't have her this time." Jonathan said quietly.

Nancy almost asked who he meant but it was obvious. Anytime anyone mentioned *her*, Nancy's mom or dad when they were in the lounge after dinner, talking about how Michael was upset because of *the* girl, or when the boys had to mention her, they wouldn't call her by name anymore, just 'when *she* was here', or when Steve talked about the monster (which had become less and less frequent since things had settled down), he would only refer to her as 'the girl who killed it'. Nancy had often wondered whether that little girl was at the center of everything. If she would only come back things would be normal-but then again, maybe nothing would ever return to normal.

"We couldn't kill it last time." Nancy said.

Jonathan nodded, "What are we going to do?"

"Get ready to fight?" Nancy asked.

Jonathan smiled, "We're good at that."

Nancy smiled back, "But more importantly, we need to watch out for our little brothers. They've been through enough."

Jonathan nodded, "So do we hit up the outdoor store after school?"

"Like last time?"

"Yeah. Like last time."

“Okay.” And for the first time since that week, Nancy felt like she wasn’t ignoring what had happened. Instead, she was going to make sure it didn’t happen again.

The boys jumped on their bikes immediately after school.

“Comic book store?” Dustin asked.

“Comic book store.” Lucas said. He wouldn’t admit it, but Lucas was not keen to go back to his house. The lights hadn’t stopped flashing by the time they had left for school.

The boys rode to the comic store. Dustin and Will immediately ran to the back of the store to look to see if the new Spiderman comic was in. Lucas was more of a Batman guy, so he went to that section. Mike stayed at the front of the store, looking outside every once and awhile. He didn’t know why they were at a comic store. He didn’t understand why they were doing these... normal things when everything in their life had become stranger and stranger. Will could shadow-walk, but instead of sitting around and thinking up ways to stop it, they were at a comic store looking through stupid stories about fake superheroes. They were reading about superheroes when their real life superhero was out there somewhere. Mike wanted to leave.

“Hey Lucas, I’ll be back in a moment.” Mike said.

Lucas looked at him warily but nodded.

Mike went outside and grabbed his bike. He rode up behind the store and towards the junkyard.

The junkyard was as much as it always was. It hadn’t changed in the last year. No one ever went there except them. It took Mike only a few minutes to reach it. The sun was starting to set, and it reminded Mike of that time Lucas and him had fought, when she was here.

Mike pulled up outside the bus and leaned his bike against it. He walked over to a big tree with a broken down motorbike leaning

against it. He sat down.

“Hey El.” He said. He pulled out a dandelion he had seen when he was riding his bike here. He placed in on the tiny cross.

It was Will’s idea to make a memorial for her. Mike was completely resistant at first, but after a few weeks thought it a good idea. This was back in the summer. Mike had grown tired of feeling so hopeless all the time. He thought it might be a good idea to consider her dead and gone. It might help him get over her.

It didn’t work.

“Will can shadow walk. It’s strange. It reminds me of what you were able to do.” Mike paused and looked at the cross. The boys had all chipped in their allowances to buy it. Mike had carved “El” onto the middle of it. He touched it now. He ran his fingers over the word. El. Eleven. The name that was always on the tip of Mike’s tongue.

“Things have become weird again. Lights. You would know what was happening, if you were here. You always knew more than you let on.”

He let his hand fall and looked to the sky.

“I miss you.” He whispered, “I miss you. Everyday. I wish you would come home, El.” He wiped away some tears, “Please, just please, come back.”

The noise of crunching leaves startled Mike. He whipped around. There, standing not too far from him near the bus, watching him, was a red-headed girl who looked startled that he had heard her.

“Who are you?” Mike said more forcefully than he meant.

“Um-I’m Max.” She said unsure. Her voice was deeper than Mike thought it would be. She had red hair falling over her shoulders and wore clothes that looked second-hand. She didn’t look dangerous and Mike settled down a bit.

“Were you eavesdropping on me?” Mike said. He would be more embarrassed than anything if she were.

“No-I didn’t mean to. I come here to think sometimes.” Max said.

Mike nodded and got up, “Oh. Well, I should get going.”

“Who’s El?” Max said suddenly. Mike stopped in his tracks and looked at her.

“I mean...I’ve seen it. The cross before. I didn’t know if it was a grave, or-“

“It’s a grave.” Mike said quietly.

Max looked at him steadily, “Who is El?”

Mike looked down and breathed out, “A friend.”

“I’m sorry then. I know what it’s like to lose people too.” Max said. She gave Mike a small smile. Mike looked up and returned it.

“Does she have a grave in the cemetery?” Max asked.

Mike shook his head. Max was usually nosier than this, but she decided to drop it.

Mike grabbed his bike and nodded at her as he made his way to the woods.

“Do you go to Hawkins Middle?” Max yelled.

Mike turned around, “Uh, yeah. Do you?”

“Yeah. Just started actually. Today was my first day.”

Mike nodded. Normally a new kid is a big thing at Hawkins Middle. There weren’t many kids, and usually everyone talks about the new kid all day. But Mike and his friends had been more preoccupied with Will’s shadow walking to really take notice of a new student.

“Eighth grade?” Mike asked.

Max nodded, “I saw you and your friends at lunch.”

“Oh.”

“It’s just that-I was sitting with the “Girl’s Group”, that’s what they call themselves, right?” Max asked.

“Oh, yeah.” Mike said laughing a bit. The Girl’s Group was the most popular group in the eighth grade. Mike and his friends thought it was really stupid they had decided to name themselves, especially since it was such a lame name.

“Jennifer Hayes has this big crush on Will and all. That’s why I noticed you.” Max said, finishing awkwardly. It wasn’t the only reason she had noticed them, but she wasn’t about to say that.

“Okay.” Mike said. He really didn’t feel like talking about Jennifer Hayes or Will or anyone right now.

“What’s your name?” Max asked.

“Mike.”

“Well, it’s nice to meet you, Mike.”

Mike nodded and was about to say the same back when he heard crashing behind him.

Lucas was running through the woods as fast as he could. He didn’t even have his bike with him.

“Lucas what are-“

“They found her.” Lucas said, panting heavily.

“What?”

“They found her Mike.” Lucas said. His eyes were filling with tears.

“Wha-they found her?!” Mike yelled. His heart felt like it was

bursting with happiness. He could barely think straight. His hands began shaking and-

“But Mike-“

“I can’t believe it! Where is she? Where is she? Let’s go!” Mike began running with his bike towards the woods.

“Mike-“

“Lucas, c’mon!”

“Mike stop!”

“What?” Mike said annoyed. He turned around and looked at Lucas.

Lucas had tears sliding down his face, “She’s-she’s not-“

“Not what?!” Mike yelled.

“Mike, she’s dead.”

Mike shook his head in disbelief. She couldn’t be dead. She was a survivor. She didn’t die. She could never die.

“Why would you say that?” Mike said. His hands were shaking and he felt like the world was growing darker.

“Mike-Hopper found her body.”

“No.”

“She’s dead Mike-“

“No!”

“Her body was on Link Street.”

“That’s-that’s impossible.”

Lucas couldn't form any more words. He put his face in his hands and cried. Mike was too stunned to do anything. He sat down in the leaves. His bike fell with a thump. Mike didn't feel like anything. He wasn't processing anything.

'But-she was going to come back.' Mike kept repeating in his head, 'She-she was going to come back.'

"Goodbye Mike."

'No. No. No. No! She's not dead'

"No." Mike said to himself, "No. No. No. No. No." He got up with a burst of energy and began running. He tripped over some branches but he didn't fall. He felt like he was going to die if he didn't get out of there right now. He heard Lucas calling for him, but he didn't care. He didn't care about anything right now. He ran and ran and ran and ran. He felt like his heart was going to burst out of his chest.

He collapsed near a tree sometime later. The tears weren't coming. Not yet. He could still feel his heart beating. He could feel it even more now. He got up and began running again.

Darkness came over the trees and Mike didn't stop. He just kept moving his feet. He had no thoughts. He had no feelings. He just knew that he had to keep running or something bad would happen. Something like Eleven-

"No!" He yelled. His feet were on fire and his breath was coming in short gasps. He lost his footing as he ran along the railway track and came crashing down. He could feel wetness on his face-'blood' he thought- but he didn't move to wipe it away.

He stayed laying on the tracks for some time. The blood ran freely down his face. It was only now-many hours later- that he began crying. It started slowly, with just a few tears slipping down, but it grew into sobbing. He couldn't keep the hysteria from washing over him and his tears mingled with the blood on his face.

"Eleven. Eleven. Eleven." He whispered to himself, and then

he began shouting, “Eleven! Eleven! Eleven!”

After a long time, with the moon high in the sky, he pushed himself off the railway tracks and sat down. He felt so weak. He had run for so long, and he hadn’t eaten since lunch. He knew he was going to pass out before he did but he didn’t make any attempts to lie down.

He looked out into the forest. If he looked long enough he began to see monsters around all the trees. He wondered if he just stayed here on the train tracks forever, would she come back to him?

He was beginning to lose any semblance of awareness. The moon was beginning to darken. He looked out into the forest one last time. He thought he saw her out there in the shadows. Her pink dress fluttering in the wind. But he blinked and she was gone.

“Eleven.” He whispered.

Then he slid out of consciousness.